



## River Management Plan/EA

### Workshop Meeting Information and Comments

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please use the information on this page to aid your understanding to some of the issues faced at Niobrara National Scenic River (NSR). Your participation is vital to the success in long-term protection and management of this national treasure.

#### Outstandingly Remarkable Values

The General Management Plan (GMP) identified five “Outstandingly Remarkable Values” (ORVs) that form the basis for management of Niobrara NSR. The ORVs are geology, paleontology, fish and wildlife, scenery, and recreation. In addition, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires the protection of water quality and the free-flowing condition of the river. The River Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (RMP/EA) will determine management zones and examine user capacities for each zone that would allow for the greatest level of protection and enhancement of the ORVs.

The ORVs may be further refined based on input from the public during the preparation of the RMP/EA.

#### Short Summary of ORVs

**Water Quality:** Water quality conditions of the Niobrara River are generally considered high and reflect the relatively unaltered setting of the area. This is due to the relatively light amount of development in the watershed and that the river is predominantly groundwater fed, which tempers seasonal fluctuations in flow.

**Free-Flowing Condition:** Within Niobrara NSR, the Niobrara River flows relatively unimpeded over bedrock or sand-dominated substrate in the lower braided reaches. The Niobrara is predominantly groundwater fed over much of its length, but also receives contributions from tributary streams.

**Geology ORV:** The Niobrara River borders the northern portion of the Sandhills of Nebraska, creating a shallow canyon through geologic formations forming the northern border of the High Plains Aquifer. The Niobrara River has cut through rock strata creating cliffs rising nearly 200 feet above the river. These processes have also exposed significant paleontological (fossil) resources. This dynamic geologic system creates and sustains a diverse landscape of entrenched river, braided channels, and sloughs providing a setting for rich paleontologic, fish and wildlife, scenic, and recreation resources.

**Paleontology ORV:** Niobrara NSR is rich in documented fossil sites. Known paleontological sites are internationally, nationally, and regionally significant. Numerous species of extinct vertebrates were first identified along the river, including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and fish. There are multiple locations where previously unknown species were first discovered and contributed greatly to our knowledge of the prehistoric past. The diversity of species found is astounding.

**Fish and Wildlife ORV:** Niobrara NSR and its tributaries have spring-branch canyons, broad valleys with floodplains, and braided channels that support an exceptional biologic diversity of plant and animal species unique to the Great Plains. Six plant communities converge along the river forming a biological crossroad that is dependent upon the geology and hydrology of Niobrara NSR. There are eastern deciduous, western coniferous, and northern boreal forests as well as tallgrass, mixedgrass, and Sandhills Prairie grasslands. In addition, the river is the lifeblood for a wide variety of fish and wildlife species. This rare mix of habitats supports over 160 plants and many animals that survive at or beyond their normal range. These diverse plant communities provide unique habitats for mammals, reptiles, birds, fish, and many other species not common or declining in the Great Plains. Several threatened or endangered species make their home along the Niobrara River utilizing braided river channels, sand bars, stream banks, and open water for nesting, rearing, feeding and migratory habitat. Species include the federally listed piping plover, interior least tern, and whooping crane as well as the state-listed river otter and trumpeter swan. The diverse habitats of the Niobrara NSR corridor may lead to the formation of hybrid species of several birds, butterflies, and plants.

**Scenery ORV:** The Niobrara NSR valley and canyon topography has conditions and microclimates unexpected in the Great Plains. The geology, six different plant communities, and minimal development of the area provide scenic experiences of seasonal colors, flowers and natural beauty. Over 200 waterfalls, in addition to canyon streams, springs and seeps, flow directly into the river, with a backdrop of rugged cliffs and dramatic scenery unusual for the area.

**Recreation ORV:** Niobrara NSR provides exceptional recreational opportunities within the Great Plains. The Niobrara's base flow provides a wide range of on-river experiences from quiet pools and riffles to rapids and chutes. Hiking trails provide stunning views of cliff top vistas and side canyons. The cliff and canyon formations, as well as abundant waterfalls, provide landscape photography and scenic driving opportunities throughout the year.

---

---

---

Please note that names and addresses of people who comment become part of the public record. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Comments may be hand delivered at any of the public workshops, mailed to the address on this form, or entered online at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/niobcomment> ***by the May 31, 2012 deadline for this portion of the process.*** Add additional pages, if needed.

[illegible]